How to... plan an event

As an event organiser, you have a legal responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all those involved in your event - all employees, volunteer helpers and contractors as well as members of the public and participants.

In order to help you, this guide is useful when planning an event on British Waterways' property. The headings used may also be helpful as a checklist. You will need to decide which parts are relevant to your particular event. Speak to your local British Waterways' events co-ordinator if there's anything you're unsure of – we're here to help!

British Waterways' Event Co-ordinators

Caledonian and Crinan Canals: T: 01463 725 500
Union and Forth & Clyde Canals: T: 01324 676903

Step 1: First things first

What – Identify the aims of the event, and the activity your participants are to enjoy. Consider any specialist provider or supervision that may be required, for example, for abseiling or paddle sports.

Where – Chose a venue suitable for your activity, considering issues such as parking needs, outdoor space and indoor facilities. Consider site conditions and existing hazards, such as level / uneven surfaces and proximity to water. Top Tip! Also consider the location of wildlife habitats.

When - Consider the time of year and ensure your plan covers extreme weather conditions, especially at an outdoor event. The time of day and day of the week will also have an effect on your helpers and participants. A clash with other major events on the Canal can be avoided by contacting the Event Co-ordinator early in the planning process.

Who – Consider who you are targeting - estimate the number of participants and any expected audience. Will they need any particular facilities?

Step 2: How to make it all happen?

Special permissions – These may be required, depending on the activities you plan to include, e.g. a live music performance would require a public entertainment licence from the local authority. Top Tip! Do any activities require specialist equipment or professional staff? If so, do they have the required certification?

Insurance - Events require public liability insurance appropriate for the activity and participants. Any contractors and performers will have their own public liability cover, and you should obtain copies of this.

Timescale - Set out the proposed timescale and give yourself as much time as possible to organise the event. You may need as much as 9 to 12 months planning. Top Tip! Consider advance registration for participants.

Welfare arrangements – These requirements are based on the number of attendees and the duration of the event. Consider the need for toilets, a lost children point, refreshments for helpers and participants and a first aid point. Top Tip! Organisations such as the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance can give advice regarding first aid cover.

Disabled Access – Consider how accessible your event is for someone with a disability.

Emergency procedure – Consider what should be done in an emergency. Who will initiate and implement the procedure? How will you contact the local police, fire brigade, or ambulance service?

Event plan – Create a formal record of all your plans. This should be continuously reviewed and updated throughout the planning process.

You might find it helpful to appoint assistants to help with your event planning. Identify specific responsibilities for each assistant – these may include safety, stewarding and first aid.

Step 3: Event site planning

Site plan - Draw up a site plan identifying the position of all the intended attractions and facilities, remembering to check for any underground or overhead cables. Plan and designate the entrance and exit points, circulation routes, vehicle access and emergency evacuation paths. Consider canal structures such as locks or swing / lift bridges – be alert for hazards such as unprotected drops, moving equipment and uneven surfaces.

Temporary structures – Some events will require temporary structures such as staging, tents, marquees or stalls. Decide where this equipment is to be obtained, who will erect it and what safety checks will be required. Consider whether barriers will be required to protect the public against specific hazards such as moving machinery, barbecues, vehicles or any other hazards.

Catering - Consider the hard standing area access for trailers, and ensure there is space for a queue. Catering providers should provide relevant certification, such as food hygiene certificates, catering licence and gas certificate. Top Tip! Consider litter and recycling bins by catering providers.

Stewards / marshals - The number of stewards will be determined by your risk assessment. Stewards at larger events should be briefed on all aspects of the event, especially crowd control and emergency procedures. Written instructions, site plans and checklists / contacts should be provided to allow communication between marshals, supervisors, the person responsible for health and safety, and the event manager. It is important that stewards can be easily identified by the public.
Top Tip! High visibility arm bands or vests may be helpful.

Crowd control - The type of event and the numbers attending will determine any measures required to maintain safety. Consider the number and positioning of barriers – particularly close to the water's edge – and provision of a public address system.

Numbers attending – An advised maximum number of people for each canal venue is available from the Event Co-ordinator.

Provision for the disabled - Specific arrangements should be made to ensure disabled visitors have adequate facilities to safely enjoy the event. This could include parking and viewing areas.

Security – Requirements will depend on the type of event, and should also be considered for equipment on site overnight, cash handling, and parked vehicles.

On-site traffic - Vehicles belonging to contractors and/or performers should be segregated from pedestrians. This would usually mean marshalled access before and after the public are on site. Ensure there is emergency vehicle access at all times.

Off-site traffic - Adequate signs and directions should be provided in prominent positions on the approaches to the entrances. The police should be contacted about on-road marshalling.

Car parking – Consider the size of your event, and if you need to provide a car park. This might be required for participants, event staff or contractors. Consider whether different users require parking in different locations for ease of access to the event. Marshals should be on hand to control car parking. Top Tip! Consider providing parking permits.

Transportation – Public transport to the event should be encouraged wherever practical.

Contractors - Ask contractors for a copy of their safety policy and risk assessments, and satisfy yourself that they will perform the task safely. Always ask to see their public liability insurance

certificate. (It is suggested that a limit of indemnity be of at least £5 million.) Provide contractors with a copy of the event plan and arrange site meetings to ensure they will work within your event requirements. The contractors' risk assessment should be used as an attachment to the event risk assessment or plan.

Performers - All performers should have their own insurance and carry out their own risk assessments (as with contractors). Where amateur performers are being used, discuss your detailed requirements with them and ensure they will comply with your health and safety rules and event plan.

Working with children or vulnerable groups - All those working with such groups should have appropriate certification. (For example, a DisclosureScotland check.)

Where **electricity, gas or water** is used, detailed arrangements must be made to ensure the facilities are safe. All portable electrical appliances, including extension leads, should be tested for electrical safety and recorded. Any hired equipment should come with a certificate of electrical safety. Outdoor electrical equipment must have residual current circuit breakers and if possible the power supply stepped down to 110volts. All cables must be channelled to eliminate any electrical and tripping hazards. All portable supplies, ie gas, fuels and generators, should be kept to a minimum, in designated areas away from the general public. These items should be suitably fenced or barriered to prevent public contact.

Contingency plans - Consider the implications of anything not going as planned, for example, extreme weather conditions. Could the event location be changed at short notice? How will the event be cancelled?

Emergency Procedure – It is important to identify who makes the decision and how that is communicated to the event marshals and public.

Clearing up - Arrangements will be required for waste disposal and rubbish clearance, both during and after the event. British Waterways encourage recycling wherever possible.

Step 4: Health and safety guidance

For large events an **event safety plan** may be helpful. This is a mirror image of the **event plan**, and considers all the health and safety aspects relevant to the event to ensure that adequate controls are in place.

In order to be effective, both planning documents should be continually updated and reviewed as plans develop or change.

Communication of the event safety plan is an essential part of planning and organising the event. A named person should take responsibility for communicating the content of the safety plan to all event staff and contractors, including to any marshals or volunteer helpers.

An **event safety plan** must include:

- Event safety policy statement
- Site safety rules
- Emergency plan
- Setting up and dismantling arrangements
- Risk assessments (see separate info sheet)
- Event safety team's responsibilities
- Emergency services provision
- Event running arrangements

The plan should also consider other items as appropriate to the event. These could include:

- First aid arrangements
- Disabled access arrangements
- Communication systems
- Transport management
- Contacts list
- Welfare arrangements
- Security & stewarding
- Details of any specialist displays
- Clearance of site at end of event
- Safety meetings reports
- Details of marquees, stalls, barriers and any other structures required

An Emergency Plan must be part of the event safety plan. This identifies the duties, responsibilities, procedures and communications to be used in any emergency. Remember to include the local emergency services, and the local hospital. A briefing should be given to all marshals / stewards detailing their role.

You should ensure that your event follows the Waterways Code, where appropriate. If event participants will include children, it may be helpful for them to learn some water safety before coming to the canals. Top Tip! Visit www.wow4water.net for children's safety activities.

Just before the event, a detailed safety check, or **walk through inspection**, must be carried out. These checks should be repeated during and after the event to identify any potential hazards and to check communications. All defects, potential problems and hazards should be noted and remedial action taken. These checklists should be retained for reference.

Routes - Ensure clear access and exit routes and adequate circulation within the site. Pay special attention to emergency routes.

Siting – Check that all facilities and attractions are correctly sited as in your site plan; in particular first aid facilities, fire extinguishers, waste bins and any cash collection boxes are in place. Top Tip! Consider throw lines at appropriate locations.

Signage - Ensure adequate signage is displayed, especially at emergency exits, and at points for first aid, information, lost children, toilets and drinking water.

Vehicles - Check vehicles belonging to contractors, performers and exhibitors have been removed from site and parked in designated areas before the public is permitted to enter.

Structures - Ensure all staging, seating, marquees and lighting structures have been erected safely and that certification is obtained from contractors.

Barriers - Check all barriers and any hazards protection measures are securely in place and there is no risk of falling from staging or other facilities.

Briefing - Check that all stewards, staff and contractors have been fully briefed and understand their responsibilities.

Stewards - Check that all staff are in their correct locations and stewards are wearing the correct clothing.

Lighting - Check all lighting is working, including any emergency lighting.

Public information - Make sure the public address system is working and can be heard in all areas.

Step 5: After the event

Site condition - Inspect the site to check that dismantle has been successful and identify any damage. Any structures left overnight must be in a safe and secure condition. Any litter must be removed.

Incidents / Accidents – Any accidents or incidents during the event must be recorded – a report form can be downloaded from the website. A copy of all accident reports must be provided to British Waterways' event co-ordinator. You should also advise your insurance company.